

**Abstract 457**

**TITLE:** Reaching Youth Through Plays: Drama as a Tool in HIV Prevention Education

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**ISSUE:** Although youth have been taught health education information in a classroom setting, there is still high incidence in STDs and HIV in South Carolina. Due to pregnancy, teenagers drop out of high school at a high rate. This shows a need for educating youth on HIV/STD prevention in a more lucid and captivating manner.

**SETTING:** The geographical location of this intervention is in Charleston, SC. Intervention is held in schools and community settings. It is intended to reach youth.

**PROJECT:** Lowcountry AIDS Services has formed a group of teenagers who perform "Slices of Life" vignettes depicting issues teens face revolving around HIV prevention. The group is called the Red Ribbon Players (RRP). The interactive program encourages audience participation and generates candid discussions. Skits climax in an unresolved dilemma and the audience is then invited to participate and discuss the issues being presented, concentrating on ways to resolve the dilemmas. This active participation helps in the learning process. A 6-minute video clip will be shown at the conference.

**RESULTS:** This is an innovative peer education model. The RRP are not only entertaining but very educationally effective. Informal evaluations conducted on the performance have shown that there has been an excellent response from the youth. This response has resulted in an influx of requests from schools and communities at large. The RRP have performed 11 times since they were formed in 1997 and in the next two months have been invited to give 21 performances.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** The outstanding response to the high school students' performance has given rise to a middle school group now being trained. There has also been a request for training African-American youth. We find that the youth have been tremendously influenced by this method of education. Pre-and post-test data will be shared. Because of its success, we recommend using drama as a tool in educating youth.

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